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
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Hard way to H E A V E N: Explained and applyed in A S E R M O N

Intended to be preached at *Peters-Cornhill*: but by Reason of the disorderly Concourse preached at *St. Katharines-Creed-Church London*: the 27th of July 1662. being the third day after his release.

By *Z. CROFTON* Minister at *Buttolphs-Algate*.

Taken as (Preached) in Characters compared with his own Notes providentially lost and brought to our hands. Now published to check and correct the misrepresentation thereof by the Sons of slander and Subjects of weakness.

L O N D O N, 
Printed in the Year, 1662,

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THE

HEAVEN Hard way to

Expended and applied in

A

SERMON

Intended to be preached at Finsbury Church, London: the 27th of July 1800. being the third day after his decease.

By E. CROFTON Minister of the Gospel.



Now published by the Sons of Handet and Sellers of
own Notes providentially sold and brought to our hands.
Taken as (Preached) in Church of St. Andrew's, Finsbury.
Weekends.

LONDON,

Printed in the Year 1800.

To the Reader.

Good Reader,

THe untrue and direct contrary reports of this Sermon, and its Author, extort the publication thereof. Mr. Crofton will not do it, he contenteth himself in the conscience of his integrity, and accounts it an easie thing to be judged of men; yea of good men; his good name is the Churches advantage, and ought to be preserved and defended against the calumnies of the wicked, and censures of the weak, who wound not him without, more deeply wounding their own souls.

I having written this Sermon from his mouth in shorthand, and (by his Notes lost by his Son, and by Providence directed to my hand) having supplied what time and the disorder of the audience caused him to pretermitt: I thought it my duty to hazard the discontent of my friend and Pastour, and to present thee with the same, that by unprejudiced reading thou mayest be undeceived, edified, and enabled to contradict the clamours of the sons of slander, and check the censure of the over-credulous subjects of weakness, though not of Sanctity. Recantation is most strangely expected from him who never yet was charged, or by argumentation was convinced of an error, on whom no terms or conditions for obtainment of Liberty was once imposed, or so much as proposed by any person whatsoever, whose non-conformity was fully, freely, and (to the honour of the honourable Persons before whom he was convened) acceptably declared, and the occasion, yea formality of which is no other then a consciencious practice, and profession of principles he ever stated in his late contests for Reformation.

I wonder to finde some serious Christians scandalized at Mr. Crofton's attendance on Gods solemn publick worship, celebrated according to the order of the Common Prayer Book, and to hear men censure him for the same, as if defe-

To the Reader.

~~Live and~~ ~~an~~ ~~appeale~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~cause~~ ~~of~~ ~~Reformation~~; in which
be ~~appealed~~ with so much ~~va~~our; I must tell the Reader, such
as sate under his ministry cannot but know and witness he
ever adjudged against leparation in his most earnest perswa-
ding or endeavours for reformation, he alway dissuaded
non-communion of members, as non-conformity of Mini-
sters, and did constantly and convincingly affirm, that mini-
sterial disorder and corrupt appendents in Gods worship was
not a sufficient cause of personal absence or non-attendants
on the same, he ever concluded guilt on the Church Collective
by these disorders and corruptions, which did not stain in-
dividuals looking to their own personal actions in their ne-
cessary attendance on Gods Ordinance: Verily we must say
Mr. Crofton in prison did only practice what he preached
whilst at liberty.

Such was Mr. Croftons care and condition in his late con-
tests for reformation, not to be esteemed an Advocate for se-
paration, or an approver of non-communion (much lesse a
Martyr for them) that in his late writing he professeth his
judgement and resolution against them.

In his Analepsis, or St. Peters bonds abiding, thou hast him
thus professing, I protest whatsoever shall be the establishment
in the Church, though never so corrupt, whilst consistent with
salvation, though it may occasion to me sufferings, and the sus-
pence of my ministry; by Gods grace it shall not effect in me,
or such on whom I have influence, Schisme from the
Church.

In his Analepsis Analephthe, or the fastning of St. Peters
bonds, he avoweth, this reformation cannot justifie the se-
paration, for that the corruptions established were never
made such essential parts of worship, as to make a sufficient
ground for separation. The sober, zealous Non-confor-
mists, who groaned under the burden of these corruptions,
and for this reformation, were grieved by, and greatly
contended against the separation, as that which was without
sufficient

To the Reader.

sufficient ground, yea like Jesus Christ their Masters, they kept communion with a Church, whose doctrine and worship was in much need of reformation; yea, and they taught men so to do.

And in his Epistle to Mr. Firmius Liturgical Considerator Considered, in which he apologiseth for Ministers not reading (not for members not learning) the Common Prayer Book; he tells us expressly his judgement and resolution in these express words. I am so much affected to the peace of the Church that I have of late preached what God assisting, I resolve to practise: viz. many and great corruptions in Gods worship are to be grieved for patiently, and groaned under, before Schismes be consented unto, and separation consulted, provided neverthe less, I be passive not active: I can keep communion under that form of worship, whereby I cannot administer and heartily say Amen to the matter of those Petitions which are put up in an order so confused, preposterous, and indigested, that it seemeth to me to be so much below the gravity of the Church, whose mouth I must be, the seriousness of the office whereby I minister, the sanctity of the duty I am to perform, and the sacred nature of the object to whom they are presented; that I dare not stand between God and his people in the same.

Let these passages and the like in his late writings be observed, as the best of his Judgement and Conscience, and let malice it self read in his practise the least contradiction to his Cause or Principles, or defection from the same, or not read with half an eye an exact conformity to himself, and clear obedience to his judgement, in a non-conforming communion.

Good Reader be pleased to observe, that Mr. Crofton's attendance on the solemn worship of God in the Tower, and in the Common Prayer Book order, is so far from being the result of his restraint, and effect of temptation, or any condition in order to his release, that his judgement was ever for it: He never did conceive that Order

To the Reader.

(Though he were a man of sufficient hart to this day, and therefore the very first day he came in prison, he did desire of the Lieutenant the liberty of going to Church, and not obtaining it, he did demand it the next day from his Gaoler: he did many times petition for the same, and solicited the obtainment thereof many months before he did obtain it: nay I must further acquaint thee, it is now neer upon a compleat year since Mr. Crofton, it being rumored that he went to the Church in the Tower, and he heard Common Prayer, did write a full Apology and defence of his practice (which was then but in the view) in that case; this Apology passed through my hands to many good people and Ministers, who would not undertake to convince the same of error, though they continued to scandalize him and his practice, and hindered the publication of the same.

These things I note unto thee Reader, that thou mayest see Mr. Crofton's practice in this case is not new or rash, but resolved and deliberate, and is so far from defection from, that it is an upright walking according to his apprehensions of the Gospel. Howsoever I could, I will not now dilate in defence of his principles and practice, nor break out to a large and sharp invective against the licentiousness of the tongues, and the lying spirits of seeming Saints so notoriously extravagant against a person so innocent and upright, and therefore exposed to the violence and rage of men on both extremes of Reformation; for hereby I know I should incense him, whose displeasure will be great for doing this, which I could not in peace have left undone.

Let me assure thee, Mr. Crofton's judgement is in Ecclesiasticks the very same it was before his confinement; he then could not, now cannot conform; he then could, now can communicate, and give an Amen to the matter of Prayers, whose order his judgement must and doth condemn: He was then, is now zealous for reformation, and against separation: He then resolved, and now resolveth, to seek Church purity by union with the Church, and to abide in the house; he endeavoureth to cleanse, to bring his offerings unto the Lord, when
(agued)

that

To the Reader.

that his soul doth hate them by reason of the prophane, haughty
and preposterous order, in which the sons of Eli do profess
themselves, and so to remove all passions from
I know it to be his burden to observe the husband and broad of
non-communicating separating sects, taken as a sign, and
whipt, how to their repeated penance, to leave the door and
that under the wing of reformation, confusion, and
even disorder, which is the true cause of non-union, but de-
structive to their honest design, but I am sure Mr. Crofton is so
zealous least the policy of some, and weakness of others should
so far amaze the eyes of the Spectators think them their
natural Children, and I am sure Mr. Crofton is sensible many are
overcome to him in negatives, against prophane, against
superstition, against corruption, against disorder; but are his
advocates in positives for no order, for no communion, for no
Church. I am sure Mr. Crofton hath sadly resented that scan-
dal under which Non-conformity groans, and is made odious,
viz. It is a spirit of contradiction against every thing, but for
nothing. Mr. Crofton well knoweth those who clamour a-
gainst his communion, make Church entity, not Church purity,
their quarrell and controversie: He hath observed their
Church gathering commenced and proceeded under the en-
deavours of Reformation, and unto the supplanting and sub-
version thereof. Mr. Crofton is convinced, that Christs true
Church, though corrupt, and Christs own Ordinances, though
disorderly administred, are to be embraced, adheard unto,
and attended, when the flocks of Christs companions are to be
avoided. I am confident Mr. Crofton is resolved to follow
his Lord when come from the flock to the threshold of the
Temple, but he dareth not go before him. Reader, if this be
an error, help Mr. Crofton to conviction, and then thou mayest
bear his recantation; in the mean time joyne with me in
prayer, that God will give repentance to the men who have
called good evil, and evil good, and uncharitably represented
a consciencious practice, of well considered, openly declared,
deliberately resolved principles, to be an apostacie, defection,
recantation,

To the Reader.

recantation, backsliding, base complying, and conformity.

The Lord encrease the number of such Apostates, who will by preaching, writing, and practise, under the reproach and rage of all men, stem their endeavours of reformation, in that strait gate and narrow way of careful, industrious, non-conforming communion with the Church in Christ's Ordinances, between those rocks which on each hand work its ruine: This is the hearty desire and prayer of,

Thine in and for the simplicity
of the Gospel.

H. M.

and attended, when the flock of Christ's companions are to be
 washed. I am confident Mr. Cotton is resolved to follow
 his Lord when come from the flock to the threshold of the
 temple, but he dares not go before him. Reader, if this be
 an error, help Mr. Cotton to conviction and then thou mayest
 have his confession in the next time join with me in
 prayer, that God will give repentance to the man who has
 called good evil, and evil good, and uncharitably represented
 a contentious practice of well contented, openly declared,
 deliberately resolved principles, to be an abominable

Hard way to Heaven.

EXPLAINED & APPLIED.

In a Sermon Preached on the 27 of July 1662.

The Text *Matthew 7:14.*

Because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, which leadeth unto life.

I Cannot but conceive many in this audience (acted more by curiosity then Christianity) come with an expectation, that I will declare and discourse the things of my self, or Gods dealings with me in my late condition: But I must let you know, I must herein disappoint you; Experiences of this nature is my own Comfort; what was to me in common with other Christians, I shall declare to your edification; and that is in generall, the serious reflections of my thoughts under the Strates of my late condition, concerning which I may say as that eminent Martyr of our reformed Religion, *John Philpot*, said in the like case, *in the Lollards Tower passing through six or seven doors, I came to my Lodging through many Straits*, where I called to remembrance, *Straight is the Gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life*; The strait passages which lead to glory, ought to be alwayes pondered, but the thoughts thereof are most proper, and profitable when we are locked up in them, and the fence thereof by a necessity of suffering what we cannot escape without sin; the Heathen accounted it their honour to represent virtue to be a *Straight and narrow way*, and therefore it self the reward of all Industry in and for it, sure I am; it is the *Glory of Christianity*, that it was never propounded to the world as an estate of ease: *Christ was never Preached without his Cross, nor was Heavens* Glory

Glory ever declared without a determination of hardship in the attainment thereof: *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*; is the Doctrine Preached by the Lord himselfe, and the truth thereof is daily proved by the experience of his Disciples.

These words are part of our Saviours Sermon preached in the Mountain, in which many particular Doctrines and special duties, were by him Stated, and directed: whether this Sermon was a set Solemn and Continued discourse, of the Preacher (as by its Circumstance it seemeth to have been, or the Evangelists Collection), and composition of those many passages, and particular discourses which passed from our Saviour on severall occasions, at sundry times (as Calvin doth conceive) I shall not now stand to enquire or debate.

In the foregoing verse our Saviour perswadeth his hearers to an hard Task *Enter in at the Strait gate*; and enforceeth his exhortation with, and by a disparity of the different paths in which men passe unto different ends. *For wide is the Gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in therat; because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it;* the one is easie and undoing, the other is hard and happy.

The Doctrine.

Our Text is the second and Counterpart of our Saviours reason; that way which is hard in its passage, but happy in its end. And it is in its self an entire proposition, and shall stand for our point of Doctrine, which we shall prosecute by way of explication, and application. *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way to life.* First by way of Explication.

The Doctrine explained.

I will not spend time in noting to you the many Readings and variations of this proposition, only observe the ancient Copies to read the same as a proposition of admiration. *How strait is the Gate! How narrow is the way which leadeth unto life!* but this be- ing an Emphasis in; no hindrance of its; argumentation it giveth no cause of controversy.

This proposition falleth into two parts to be particularly explained.

The Subject.

1. The Subject or thing spoken of *The gate and way to life.*
2. The predicate, or thing spoken of it: *It is strait and narrow.*
Of these in order, and first of the Subject, or thing spoken of, and

and therein we have two things also observable.

The end
of a Chri-
stians strife

1. The End, Life;

Iob. 26 4

Prov 3. 16.

8. 35.

Not natu-
rall life.

Math. 16.

25.

Not spiri-
t uall life.

but ete-
nall life.

1 Cor. 15.
12.

Rev. 1. 2.

2 The means under this Metaphor a Gate, a way, life is that end, and estate which is to be aimed at, and driven unto by the Gate and way, which our Lord Jesus Christ doth advice and direct, this is the marke all must strive to hit, the prize of our high Callings. All must press to possesse; for this, left by shooting short or wide, doth utterly undo us, and sink us in perdition: May it is Life an undoubted Blessings, a most eminent Blessing, the Emphasis, the Emptie of all blessings, peace, plenty, honour, and dignity are meer nullities to dead men, a Worm is as much as a Crown to a man in the graves, he who is not, cannot be rich or honourable; whatever be mans estate, he is only happy by being; take away his life, and you take his all life is the chief of blessings to be pursued with utmost Diligence preserved with ut most Care, and purchased at the dearest rate, *All that a man hath he will give for his life*. The Devil well knew the worth of this Jewel, when he durst presume to put at *Job* to pawn his confidence & integrity: the insensible eternity of his life, to the securing of a present transient puff thereof. But the life in my Text is more than a bare naked life, it is the life which is in the right hand of wisdom, which comprehendeth all goodness, real good; this is not a natural life, though that is to be preserved and prized; yet for the securing of this life, it is to be parted from and lost; of, & in this sense, our Saviour hath determined *he who will save his life must lose it*: The natural life capacitate to the enjoyment of the good things of God, but this life gives us the enjoyment of your good God himselfe: this life is not the spiritual life; I do not mean in respect of its nature and quality, for so it is spiritual; but I mean, it is not such in respect of degree, and operation, whereby the life of Grace (the same in kind) is distinguished, as different from the life of Glory: this life giveth us a Converse with God remote, and at a distance subject to weakness and imperfection, and many heat chilling, almost heart killing interpositions; and cloudy dispensations: But the life in our Text gives us the enjoyment of God immediately in his presence; fully in himselfe: perfectly seeing him and knowing him, as seen and known of him, and eternally without parting from him, or his parting from us, this is the River of Life which runneth in the City of God: into Rivers of pleasure in his presence for evermore: it is

therefore that which Christians in Scripture-language call the *life of God, the life of Christ; the life of Glory, life everlasting*. It abideth after the natural life is expired, it aboundeth beyond what the spiritual life (as distinct from this life) doth or can extend unto. This life is the Emphasis, the excellency of Eternity it being thereof the subject Eternity simply and in the abstract, is an amazing dismaying property, a soul that sitteth, or walketh in the vale of the shadow of death, and casteth his eye on the black, boundless, bottomless Ocean of Eternity, findeth the same to reflect, affrighting dreadful apprehensions on his soul; which are appeased and made comfortable by onely discerning eternity is the adjunct unto nature: Men cannot without dread and terror shoot the Gulph of natural death, because thereby they pass into eternity, it is the assurance of life in eternity, which encourageth the soul in so sad passage, and this life eternal is the City, end, estate, unto which the Gate and way in our Text doth lead.

The
means to
life.

The means conducing to this end is by a Metaphor called and compared to a Gate, to a way, and as such it doth represent unto our serious observation, the *nature, the order, and the number* of that means which doth effect, or by which men must work out their own Salvation.

Its nature.

First, this Metaphor doth note unto us the *nature of the means of Grace*, which tends unto Glory: It is a *Gate; and a way*: a Gate a way, are places of personal motions under special prescription, and limitation unto some peculiar place or end: and these places are denominated Gates and Ways in relation to their termination, and the necessity of mens motion in them: a Gate: as that close passage, by which if men do not enter, they can no way move in the *Way, or Street* which leadeth further. The way is that narrow bounded passage, by, or in which men can onely move in safety, unto the place at which they would arrive, if they step out of these bounds they are trespassers and in danger, and therefore by their personal motion, under these prescriptions, they can only arrive at their desired places: this then doth teach us. The means which must effect eternal life, is *man's personal motion, and activity under Gods prescriptions, directions, and limitations*; these are the paths of peace, the way of wisdom, and the Gates of righteousness, the termination must be from God, but the motion must be from man, the Lord doth set, but man must keep within these bounds, direction is divine observation

Prov. 3.
19-4. 11.
Plal. 118.
29.

must

must be humane; every man who will get Heaven, must go to Heaven in Gods way: he who will win God, must walke with God, according to the will of God. *He that will wear the Crown of righteousness must run the race of righteousness*, eternal life cannot be obtained by humane invention, nor without humane motion, or industry, they will equally miscarry, who stand still in, or strike out of the way, which God directeth, and hath determined: *Israel could never have possessed Laish though the Gates stood open, if they had stood still, and not advanced towards it.* Heaven is not the event of idleness, but of activity: when the Lord hath once bounded, determined, directed the Gate: the way of life must move in it with all care and constancy, diligence, endeavour, industry is required from men for the effecting of their Salvation; They are called upon *to fight, strive, and wrestle, run, press, proceed*, in Gods Commandments: to work out their own Salvation: I could never yet understand or approve the mute, non moving Religion of such *Quakers* who pretend most to Gods Guidance. Miserable are the desires and hopes of life, which strive not unto the attainment and security thereof; vain are the professions of God, which provoke not motion towards God, such who call Christ, *Lord, Lord*, hear him, and assent to the truth of what he speaketh, but will not do what he saith, will find the Gate of life shut against them when they would but cannot have admittance; not every one who saith *Lord, Lord*, but he who doth the will of my Father, are in the Gate, the way, and shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, saith our Saviour in this very Sermon, and shortly after this very Text: God hath determined his worship, declared his will, appointed his Ordinances, Men therefore must with all care, caution, constancy and diligence, attend, observe, and do the same, the Gate, the way to life is mans activity in faith and obedience: mans labour in word and Sacraments, Mans industry to do the several duties of his general and particular Calling; having known the will of God, we must up and be doing, having seen the way of righteousness, we must stretch our Limbs, and actively strive and press forward in it: though man is *Passive* in receiving the first Principles of Grace, and all subsequent strength to duty, he must be an Agent in the pursuit of Glory. I never could believe man had of himselfe *free will* to good; nor that man could ever enjoy God, without doing good, with the force of a *free will*: God may turn our faces towards Zion, but we must go thither on our own legs,

Gen. 17.
C. 1. 1. 10.

Heb. 12. 1.

Judg. 18.

1 Tim. 9.

12.

Luke 13.

24.

1 Cor. 9.

Phil. 3.

14. 2. 12.

ver. 28.

Mal. 3. 17. they go from strength to strength every one in Zion up to the top: they appear before God: Christ Iesus may first apprehend us but we must follow after reach forth unto those things which are before us, press forward
Phil. 3. 12. that we may apprehend that for which we are apprehended of him; the serings may enforce; but the wheels themselves move in the clock, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: But we must pray, labor, &c. It is Christ who strengtheth us in his concern in all conditions, knowledge how to wait and abound, patience under provoking afflictions, must be our own act: Salvation is Gods gift, but we must seek it, and receive it like our selves, by serious, studious, zealous, constant motion in the way of Gods commandments, he that first shall when he sees his way, shall never come to his journey, and; the natural language of saving conviction, is, what shall we do. Be assured (Christians) they who enter not the Gate, move not in the way, get not unto life. Be ye therefore not slothful but followers of them, who through faith unto duty, and patience, in difficulty inherit the promise.
Heb. 9. 11. Secondly, in this Metaphor we may observe as the nature, so the order of the way, which leadeth unto life: it is a Gate, a way, first a Gate, then a Way, mens motion unto entrance, and after progress in the way of Gods prescription, and limitation: God is God of order; nor must we think him more regular in humane society, the things of the world, then in the Affairs which concern his own Glory, and his peoples Salvation; they who act preposterously in the things which concern us, do reproach their maker, and they who act preposterously in the things which concern God, reproach their Redeemer, nature and necessity doth make a Gate of entrance, proceed the way of progress, to any unpounded sent: Inhabitation must be before progress: though there is in some sensible cases an entrance without progress in the way of God; there cannot possibly be a progress without entrance: many may indeed begin in this point, but end in the flesh: run well in the first acts, but be hindered in the course of Christianity: utter they have known the way of righteousness, and escaped the pollutions which are in the world through lust, they may be again entangled therein, and overcome and turn from the holy Commandment: some who are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven, may fall short of it: and some who are almost, may never be altogether Christians; but none can walk in him, who have not first received by grace the Lord: none can be edified, who are not entered into the most holy Faith

the Scriptures, and Ordinances of God, do represent unto us the Gate before the way of Glory: the entrance of the word of God which doth make wise the simple, the first principles of the Oracles of God, the foundations of faith, the first Conversion and forming Christ in the soul; the Sacraments of God are suited to this order. Baptism is a seal of an Imitation to the Church, engraving into Christ; Incorporation to the Saints: The Lords Supper is a Sacrament of growth and continuance in Christ of progress in the way of faith; and true Religion and such as move nor in this order, cannot possibly pass unto eternal life: It is in Grace and Religion, as in nature, and secular affairs, and in both: It is all one, not to undertake an enterprise, or to invest the order of motion, necessary to any end: They that enter not the Gate, may move and go for nard, but not into the City: they who lay not the foundation, may form a frame, but cannot build any standing structure: such who secure not their Birth, and are not rooted in Christ, cannot grow up in him: It is with many prosperous Christians, as with rash giddy Coucellors, who dispose the Conquest, and divide the Beares skin, before they consult the war-fare, or go out to kill the Bear, or like wandering beggars, who being in constant motion, neither know nor care whither they go, so they have but an house in their eye: so many having heard of Heaven, and Holmes wander with a blind affection any ways, in which they may keep that within sight, but never consider whether they have entered the Gate of this Enclosure: Let me tell you, many will prove this destructive to them, that they take a view of the dignity, without any care of the duty of a Christian, and grow great and strong in the joy, confidence, and expectations of Saints who are strangers, yea enemies to the principles and practises of piety, to the fundamental doctrines of faith, and ordinances of worship; I have with amazement observed deluded souls, to have passed from some gross prophaneities, Idolatrys, and Superstitions, and to wander in by paths, with the greatest security, alacrity, confidence, joy, professing (to the Blasphemy of the Gospel, shame of Martyrs, and scandal of Religion) the fullest assurance of their interest in, and approach unto eternal life, that is imaginable; and this not onely under the greatest sufferings, but also the most grosse errors, and grievous sins, pride, perfidie, perjury, selfishness, seditions, treasons, and rebellions, which were even perpetrated

Heb. 6.4; *ted under the Sun; and what is more with an heaven daring boldness, affirming their abominations to be the cause of God; I could never conceive other cause thereof then this, they having gotten a sight of heaven, tasted the good word of God, and powers of the world to come: giddily to run out without any consideration of the Gate care of entrance, regard unto the Foundation knowledge of, First principals of Religion; but with a blind affection, move forward in any estate? and it is possible to move toward it, and not come into it, to keep it in sight, in a way which leadeth not into it, they deceive themselves, defend all their errors and Impieties, and will not hear of a deviation, because Heaven is in their Eye, Life is within their view, glory is in their intention; as if Balaam were sure to dye, the death of the Righteous, when and because he and all his conspirations, and endeavours to curse Israel saw their glory and the good will of God unto them: Beloved friends consider mens Estate is *Converted*, or *unconverted*, as to God, Christ, and true Religion, the *unconverted* must make sure they enter the Gate, the strait Gate learn Principles of faith, lay in their Souls the Foundations of Religion; the *Converted* must with care and caution move in the Narrow way without deviation, or diversion without going aside or going back: If you have not rightly entered talk what you will, I cannot but suspect your attainments in grace; many of you talk of Religion, and seem to be zealous for it, forward in it whose confused notions, deluded apprehensions, and deviating Conversations, do witnesse you have not entered the Gate, or at least, and best are gone aside from the way that leadeth to life: Look to*

1ob. 18. 4. Gods order, if ever you will live with God in honour, whatever Religions humour may act you to invite Gods order, you must know the Earth must not be removed for you; if you will not exactly minde Gods method, you must and will miscarry in your designs, and intentions for his life and glory, for sad is their estate who professe to pursue, and yet never enter the pathes of peace, and more sad is theirs who entered into the way of Righteousnesse, *turne aside* from the holy Comandements.

The number of the means. The third thing which lieth in this Metaphor is the number of the means of Grace. It is a Gate a way, singular, not plurall, one, not more nor many much of the difficulty in the souls passage to life, would be discharged by the multiplicity of pathes: the danger incident to the one, would be avoided by entrance into another

offer whatsoever be the many special acts of holiness, the Gate of righteousness is, and can be but one. The means whereby to get eternal life is one and but one: in its general nature, it is special, it is singular: you may observe they are predicated by unites, one God, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptisme, one Body, and one Spirit; and indeed the speciality of it is fixed in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ who sayeth of himself I am the Way: and well sayeth the Apostle Paul, Christ is not divided; Christ may be differently dispensed by doctrines of Faith, different ordinances for worship and directions unto duty, differently exhibited in his different natures, God, Man, Offices, Prophet, Priest and King; or different Acts of Mediatorship, as his Incarnations, Converse among men, observation of the Law, death, resurrection, Ascension, and intercession, or differently administered, that is, made known, and exhibited by different Ministers in respect of their Kinde, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, or in respect of the different individual Persons under any kind, as Paul, Apollo, Cephas, and the like; but in these, all these, or any of these, Christ is not divided; he is and must remain whole and entire; the one, only way to life; These things of Christ may be dissimilee, they are not, they cannot be opposita, for they then would be inconsistent, destructive each to other: A Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand, Christ divided doth cease to be: they that embrace not Christ under all his exhibited acts and Offices, under all his dispensed Ordinances, Doctrines and Directions, in all and every of his Ministers, enter not the Gate, walk not in the way to eternal life: nor are these in any contrary wayes, but the same one individual way existing in so many distinct and different steps: they who dream of many, not onely different, but directly contrary wayes to Heaven, and will deceive themselves and others: For that Gate and Way which admitteth no Forgiveness: nor regresse, no diversion, deviation or stepping aside on either the right or left hand, and is the same to all and every Traveller, can be but one: to divide in the way is ordinarily incident to Saints: but to divide the way is inconsistent with salvation: I have often admired, and must confesse I cannot understand that monstrous charity of our Age, that men should turn backs in doctrines of faith and Acts of Worship, and yet shake hands with a friendly confidence of meeting one another in Heaven: to

Eph. 4. 4.

John 14.

10:

1 Cor. 1.

13.

constitute contrary Churches, & consecrate a contrary Ministry, and so create a contrary worship in the same (and *Forma dicitur*, *sentiam*,) though the matter be Good, and yet expect that men should know them as *Sacris*, and call them theirs of *Salvatoris*, and conclude them in the Way to heaven, is as much as if men should conclude the ten Tribes, with their new idols worshipping God according to the Law of *Mosis*, in their new planted Churches at *Dan*, and *Bebeth*, were equally related to, interested in, and accepted by God as was *Judah*, and those that feared the Lord, and fled from this new contrary course of Religion, though for matter Gods own institution: I am sure the Apostle was a stranger to this Charity, when he concluded of the Separating Sects in his time, dividing in doctrine and from the Communion of the Church; that they hold not the head, by which the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. I do not deny but *Joseph's* brethren may too unnaturally strive in the way to their Father; but if any of them start from or turne out of the way, they are not like to see him. *Schismes* I grant may be in the Church, and they are full and sad, but *Schismes* from the Church are immediately subverting to Salvation: inferring contentions may arise between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, unto an undue heat, concerning Society with a defective brother, inasmuch that they may part asunder the one passing to *Cyprus* the other to *Gilicia*, and yet both may meet in Heaven. But *Barnabas* and *Pyrrus* Contrariety to the course of Christianity in a slavish compliance with the Circumcision, is to be contradicted by a zealous *Paul* as destructive to Salvation: I withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed because he walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel. *Hooper* & *Ridley* may wish too much heat expostulate the retaining Popish rites & Ceremonies appendant to Religion in the reformed Church & yet agree in the strait and fiery passage to heaven. But *Samuel* cannot in charity hope in heaven to meet *Pendleton* turning back upon the Truth, or *Grimwald* who would not pledge him in the Cup of his Martyrdom for the truth of the Gospel: I desire to have Charity towards all men, but Charity must operate in due & proper Acts, according to the quality of the Object, the charity which commendeth countenanceth & concludeth certainty of life unto the many wanderers out of heavens way, in the by-patches of their own fancy and humour, unto the contradiction of the Truth, and

Coll. 2.

39.

Acts. 15.

39.

Gal. 2. 11

12, 13, 14

casting off Gods Ordinances, and Gospell ministry, and cutting themselves off from the communion of the Church, is a *foolish pitty*, inconsistent with the knowledge of Gods order for mans salvation: such as make many and contrary wayes to Heaven, may make a noise and professions of holiness in the world, but will in the end find themselves mistaken, and others by them misguided unto the losse of eternall life, unto which there is but a Gate, a Way, one single Gate, and Strait way, not to be declined: It is indeed true, the heavenly City is said to have *twelve Gates*, but we must observe this City is the end, not Gate of the Christians journey. The *City of life*, to which the narrow way doth lead, and the multiplicity of these Gates, are Metaphorically mentioned to amplify the Glory thereof: Mans dignity is ample, and abundant, free and full; but mans duty is anxious and afflicted, strait and narrow; all that enter into the City with 12. open gates, must enter at the one Strait gate; and travell in the one Narrow way, which leadeeth thereunto: such a walk as large in sight of Heaven will find themselves locked out of this glorious palace, when their past professions of Christ will make them think it hard.

I have done with the Subject or thing spoken of (*viz.*) the means of mans Salvation, the Gate, the way to life: I must now passe unto the Predicate or thing spoken of this Gate and Way, and that is, it is *Strait and narrow*. The predicate.

This predicate doth declare the property of the passage unto Glory: it is *strait & narrow* or as some, *strait & low close & little*, as others, or *serious, & sorrowfull*, say others It is a Metaphor made use of, to make known the *Difficulty, & Danger* which doth attend Travellers in the Way to life & happiness, as a strait Gate cannot be entered with ease nor without stooping, and many times Stripping a mans self of all things superfluous, and many times many things necessary, nor can men walk in a narrow way with any great pleasure or freedom, no not without striving and pressing many times, to the pinching of their bodies and perplexing their mind how to pass forward, and make their way through unto the attainment of the desired end, and an arrivall at their intended places of life, and rest: such is mans estate in the use of the means of Grace for the obtainment of Glory, in his entrance into and walking in Christ Jesus our Lords Heaven is not had with so much ease as most men imagine, and the light negligent carriage of too many

Christians give themselves to think Religion is not a business of such facility to follow and maintain as many dream and suppose a Christians Conversation is not so smooth and current as many do conceive. Oh no: the Gate of righteousness is more strait, the way of holiness is not so narrow: such who will enter it must strip themselves of all superfluities of life, and worldly substance: they must cast off the works of darkness, and all that sin, which *passeth them by*, and cast abroad their worldly comforts being ready to distribute; willing to communicate, selling that which they have to give unto the poor: sometimes the passage may be so strait, that they must strip themselves of their very necessities, Lands, Livings, Friends, Houses, Brethren, Sisters, Wise Children, and Life itself, if without which they cannot praise God nor press in the way to life. Lying dead in the way by pressing for motion, and progress in the course of Christianity, is many times the event of the Saints labour, and their actual formal entrance into the City of life: nor doth the *straitness* of this gate, or narrowness of this way call for, and more necessitate the soul to be thus *stripped*; then that when thus it doth so, how down, bend unto the very dust, and creep on its very belly: the will must be subdued unto, resigned up to Gods will, in doing, in suffering: *Thy will be done* is the Childes only cry, and in heavens way we must become Children like Children: Mans reason must be resigned up to divine Revelation: The wicked man must forsake his own thoughts; as well as the unrighteous man his wayes: Naamans proud heart must stoop to the Prophets counsel, and walk in Jordan, or he must not lose his Leprosie: Gods Word must cast down every imagination, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ: Whosoever will walk with God, must walk humbly with God: Christians in heavens way must like Christ, stoop at Gods will under the rage of men, bow down under the fury of the Oppressor, and let the wicked passe over them: they must sometimes give their back to the smiters, and their cheeks to them who pluck off the hairs: they must not hide their face from shame and spitting: they must in many perplexities, passe into the possession of life and glory: Heavens way is not high enough for sinfull man to stand upright in: they must proceed with pain and grief, affliction, and anxiety: for strait is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven: and the light that has shined in the world is now in the world.

In the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.

This Gate is said to be strait, and this way narrow, in many respects; or for many reasons, which the learned do observe upon this Text: as because it is *repugnant to mans reason, distasteful to mans lust, and affections, attended with distress, great and many afflictions*: every of these reasons are true, and good demonstrations of the difficulty of mans salvation: but I shall not insist upon them, but propose to your consideration one which is more proper, and is most specially intended in the Text.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way to life, for it is *terminal, limited, bounded, and restrained*: this gate and way is an *Enclosure*; on each side of which are *Bounds* which cannot be broken without danger; there are *Limitations* which cannot be left in safety: and this is the reason of all that difficulty and danger, anguish, affliction, to which men are exposed, because they must walk, move forward within such *strait bounds*, and *narrow Limits*, and may not, cannot with any safety turn back, or turn aside, when once entred into this strait gate and narrow way.

Mans invention is indeed a large Field, and common Road; but Gods will is a *strait gate and narrow way*: that once revealed, man is by and to it restrained, and may not turn aside from it unto the right hand, or to the left: mans passage towards heayen is like unto the passage into a prison, or rather a Palace, where the entertainment is by a low, little Wicket, to which men must stoop, and in which they cannot enter with anything *superfluous*: and the progress is over a narrow Bridge open on both sides, on which if a man do not move with caution and circumspection, and tread with even steps, he will tumble into the ditch; one wry step may prove his ruine. *Holiness* is like *Jonathan's* motion to kill the *Philistines* upon an high rock, by a narrow path, on each side of which is a precipice, and in which they cannot go but must creep on their hands and knees: *Godliness* is a most regular militation, in which the Soldiers are kept close to order, commission and instructions not to move one foot without or beyond the same. *Marscallo* the French General

first Knighted a Scotch Soldier for an eminent service he had done, and then beheaded him, for doing it without Commission; and the same God who blessed the house of Obed-Edom for entertaining the Arke, made a *Perex Uzza* for *Uzza's* presuming irregularity to uphold it when shaken in the Cart, and in danger to fall; sincerity in Sanctity is a most straight line in which no part is crooked; an upright man goeth right forward in Gods way, without bending on either hand; Christianity is a clear Criticisme; true Religion is reduced to a narrow point; these are on both hands beset with sin; good is the Councell of Wisdome, *turne not to the right or left hand, remove thy foot from evil, Pro. 4. 2*. What the heathen conclude of morall vertue, is most true of Christian Graces (*in medio consistit virtus*) true vertue is the narrow middle way, the extremes of which in defect or excess are manifest and notorious vice. It is all one in nature to shoot short, or wide of the mark; to be dashed on *Sylla* or *Charybdis*, to loose Salvation by prophane-ness, or superstition; to subvert the faith, by ignorance or error; to root up the Church by persecution or seperation; to destroy Gods worship by Irreligion or innovation; to walk evenly, to stand steadily between those extremes, and works which are on each hand, *hic labor, hoc opus*, is an hard piece of work, which will cause much care, charge and pains.

I cannot but observe the Scripture Record doth represent the Saints integrity to have been proved, and approved by an exact obedience in some narrow Crisis, special Acts, and particular points, in which they were most closely Pinched. The whole Law was too large a field for mans obedience in innocency his willing subjection to the sovereign power of his Creator, must be proved by the pinch of one forbidden tree, whilst all in their first creation were appointed, and all others were left common, and free unto him. *Noah* must be the Preacher of righteousness, by preparing the Arke (an improbable instrument to save him, when the floods should overwhelm Houses, and mountains) *Abraham* may follow God he knows not whether, but must be approved of the Father of the faithful, by hoping above hope, unto the Sacrificing of his son *Isaac*: we have heard of the patience of *Joh*, which is only remarkable in one point, he charged not God foully; we have also heard of the passions of *Joh*, he cursed the day of his birth, but he cursed not his God; he challenged, but he charged not the Lord! *Dauids* faith was approved by his loyalty, his enemies

mies head was in his hand, when his heart smote him for cutting
 off the Lap of his garment; what shall I tell you of *Moses*, of *Jer-*
emiah, of *Daniel*, of the three Children, of the whole cloud of
 witnesses, whose faith is found sincere by a single point of obedi-
 ence, *Heb. 12*. Christianity is a most narrow Crisis, and must be
 well and warily discerned; I cannot but wonder to hear some men
 when convincingly pinched by a distinct discovery of their devi-
 ation from truth, and piety, cry out against *distinctions* as Anti-
 christian and impious: tell them they must discern between
 Churches, Ministers, Baptismes; for these contradictions, or con-
 trary Constitutions cannot be Christian, and carry to heaven;
 they will cut off all possibility of conviction by crying out against
rigid distinctions in matters of Religion; I must tell such in, no
 case doth that Rule (*Quibane distinguit, bene docet*): distinction is
 mans direction, hold good so much as in the case of Religion
 and Salvation, which is many times won or lost, upon a nice and
 narrow point, *saving* on not eating an Apple, *butcher*ing or not
*butcher*ing; and only some such who pretend to move in heavens
 way without *distinction*, march with confidence, and security to
 destruction; distinction is the *ratio formalis* of the strait gate, and
 narrow way; no difficulty, no danger in a way, which needeth
 no distinction; saving Grace is a *discerning Spirit*; the spiritual
 man is a *discerner of the things of God*; distinction is the only de-
 monstrator of sincerity, and soundness in the faith; *Heretics must*
come, that they who are sound may be made manifest; my sheep know
 my voice, saith Christ; The devil is often turned into an Angel of
 light to engage the Elect of God to careful considerate distinc-
 tion; the Spirit of God shall sometimes tempt the *distinguishing*
 power of Gods people, true piety must be approved, by a nick, or nar-
 row point of obedience in every condition, and relation; avoid-
 ing all deviation, as well as defects; and this cannot be observed
 if not discerned; there is a *simplicity of the Gospel*, from which we
 must not be beguiled, a truth of the Gospel according to which we
 must walk with right steps, the outlet of distinction, is the inlet
 of delusion; neglect to discern the truth that you may embrace it in
 the love of it; and you shall easily believe *hars* the Cautions in
 Scripture are to no purpose to men who cast off distinction; *take*
beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the like, are insignificant
 directions to men of no distinction: the neglect

1 Cor. 13

19.

John. 10

of distinction, will make Peter a sinfull Conformist, as well as those pointed at in Heb. 10. 29. *where sinfull non-communicants*: there is no estate in which we are in the world, which is not on both hands bounded with sin: are we Prosperous? it is a narrow point to receive the Creatures of God with thanksgiving, to use them humbly and with sobriety, not unto pride and tyranny, security and carnall confidence, in the casting off God, or contempt of our brethren: with discretion to esteem, enjoy, and use them as Gods good blessings, and yet not to abuse them to the satisfaction of our sensual lust, and the entangling of our souls in sin: How Hard doe we find it, in the day of affliction, and distresse, to shun sinfull, senselesse *Apathie*, Stoicall *stupidity*, and impatient *anxiety*, peircing grief or fear, heart-perplexing, God-provoking *Cares* and *Complaints*, not to lay aside, nor let our naturall passions break out, beyond the bounds of sobriety, reason or Religion: to fear without *fretting* discerne danger without *diffidence*, to be angry without *envy*, to grieve without *grudging*: to mourne without *murmuring*, to be stricken and smitten of God, afflicted all the day long, and lye in *silence*, without *repining*, or *charging God foolishly*: or charging piety to be perplexing *folly*: but to lay our Mouthes in the dust under our oppressed innocency, because the Lord hath done it: to be reviled of men, and not to revile againe, to be oppressed and persecuted, yet free from revenge: to blesse them that curse us, and pray for them who despise fully off us, is a lesson not easily learned: truly friends, my experience hath found it a strait Gate, a narrow way, to retain quick and lively senses, under the restraint of a lively faith: to fear and grieve, and yet not fly in the face of men, or forget God: I cannot but observe *Apathy* in afflictions is manifest *prophanesse*, and impatency is no lesse then *impious*: God aggravateth Israel's *prophanesse* by their *stupidity* and shamefull *Apathy*: when he set them on fire round about, they knew it not: It burned them and they layed it not to heart, he observeth as an argument of insensibility under his hand: He complaineth of them, as impudently *impious*, because when they were stricken they did not grieve: He charged it as an iniquity indelible to be merry and joviall in Feasts, and full expressions of joy, when his providence and their perplexing state doth call for weeping and mourning: And on the other hand he rebuketh *excesse of passion* as no lesse *prophane*: Who Art thou that art affraid of the fury of the oppressor

1. Pet. 2. 12

1. Pet. 2. 12

Isa. 42. 25

Jer. 5. 3

Isa. 22. 12

Isa. 13. 14

Isa. 15. 12

13.

presser, and forgettest the Lord thy maker: not to fear is inhumane; to
 fear without faith, is Unchristian; not to care is contrary to reason,
 to care unto vexations diffidence, concerning future events, is con-
 trary to true Religion; not to mourn in misery is incongruous to
 men, (Subjects of sense and reason) to mourn as without hope is
 incongruous to Christians, in whom reason is rectified, and di-
 rected to expectation of a better change. The nature of patience
 doth charge sin on both extreame, it presupposeth, it preserveth
 passions existent; whilst it aboundeth, restraineth, regulateth the
 same; we have heard of the passions of Job; I could never under-
 stand the patience, and meekness of Malefactors, who suffered
 the utmost sorrows, under the greatest, most manifest Guilt,
 without the least of grief, or fear, commotion of mind or per-
 plexing apprehensions Yea under the greatest ostentation of joy &
 peace, being canonized by their friends for Martyrs, on the on-
 ly ground of their confidence: which (to the Blasphemy of
 Christianity and its Martyrs) they call Christian courage, sure I
 am that they who rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of Glory,
 believing in whom they had not seen, were in heaviness under all
 kind of grief, through manifold temptations; and they who trust-
 ed in the living God, who had delivered, and would deliver
 were by the power of their passions pressed out of measure, and above
 their strength; a due deportment in every condition as men, and
 Christians, is a narrow strait, an estate of great difficulty and
 danger; the same bounds and strait Limits attend our relation
 and the duties thereof; How hard for Subjects (as sincere David)
 to retain Loyalty and affection towards oppressing persecuting
 Princes? How hard for Servants to be subject to their Masters,
 not only the meek and gentle, but also to the froward? to do
 well and suffer for it patiently, is an hard saying, who can bear
 it: This Straintness attends our whole Conversation, and the
 course of our lives in common as Christians; to continue Com-
 munion with Christ Church, under many and great Corruptions; and
 not to comply with and conform, unto sinfull impositions; not to
 leave Gods Ordinances when made grievous to the Soul by hu-
 mane Appendants, and disorder, not to cease the offerings of the
 Lord, when the prophane and violent disorder of the
 Sons of Elie make them leave the same; to hear them who
 say, but do not; only because they are in Moses chair,
 to beware of the leaven, of the Pharises, being bound to
 hear them; who ordinarily teach for doctines the traditions of

men; and makes the word of God of none effect: to retain Church unity, under its impurity, and attend Gospel-ministry in prophane subjects; to be zealous for reformation, without running into, or striking hands with separation, is his labor box open to religious hearts who walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, a straight gate, a narrow way, a narrow Gchsis and point of duty, which cannot be declined without danger, sin lying on both hands, by defect, or excess to destroy us: the way to heaven is apparently strait and narrow, because thus bounded and terminated; and for this reason our Saviour doth declare it so to be.

In this Sermon, our Saviour doth direct exact obedience into a narrow Gchsis, and place perfection in a strait punctilio: The scope and drift of the Sermon is to shew the bounds and limits of the way of life, the restraints of Religion, which the error and superstition of the Jews had broken down, to the facilitating of their passage to Heaven.

His most pleasing Preface proppendeth poverty of Spirit, mourning, meekness, purity and perfection, and the like preplowing propertie, as Conditions of the Beatitude he doth declare: His directions unto duty begin with a determination of dread, He that breaketh the least of these Commandments shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven: and so proceeding to terminate duty by a clear exposition of the Law, he placeth the breach of the Law in a little, narrow point. Further he determineth in a fearful word of picture: Adultery in the cast of the eye: Disobedience in the sight of a parent profaning Gods Name in a groundless and trivial Oath: the whole matters of his Sermon are most strict Rules, in the observation whereof he placeth perfection, in similitude to God: and in this very Text the strait is opposed to the wide gate, the narrow to the broad way, the way of sin is an open Champaign, the champion ground, in which the mighty Hunters against the Lord doe sport themselves without any limits: but the way of Sanctity is an Enclosure, a passage perillous, fickle, difficult, dangerous, in which men cannot move without fear and care, without pain and grief, without crosses and losses, without smart and suffering, without pressing and striving, and yet out of it they may not turn to right or left hand without certain ruine.

The way to Heaven is a red Sea passage, in which there is no possibility of motion unto safety and life, but by going forward; for enemies are behind; and walls of water doe on each side enclose us, if we give back the enemies will destroy us, we cannot

beside but the Sea will drown us; by going forward we may meet with a wilderness march, and many encounters with the sons of *Anack*, and the Kings of the Countries through which we travel: but we are sure at last to arrive at the Land of life and promise, for *strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.*

I have done with the explication of this Proposition: before I pass to application, I shall note and but note unto you the Arguments which doe convincingly demonstrate that *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*, and I shall not wander to seek them, they are suggested in the Text, and are these.

Life is the end unto which this way doth lead, and that you heard before is an estate of excellency, its obtainment and effecting must needs be by means of intricacy; difficulty is inseparably attendant on dignity: the passage into a Princes Pallace is not common or easie, but by many strait gates and dark entries: Pebbles lye common on the surface of the earth, but Pearles are hidden in the bowels thereof, and must be digged out with difficulty and danger: Needs there be any more said to convince you, that Grace and Holiness is a *strait gate and narrow way*, then to tell you it *leadeth unto glory*: this estate was not purchased without the Lord Jesus coming from Heaven, being tempted by the Devil, tormented by men, forsaken by God, and his passing through the straits of a shameful cursed death: and can we think it should lie common and open without guard or enelosure, for any that will, when they will, which way they will to enter into? It is below its worth, and should expose it unto contempt.

This Gate and way is *strait and narrow*, because singular 'tis one, and 'tis but one. In this way we must go to Heaven, and out of this way we cannot get to Heaven: singularity is alway attended with difficulty, be this way never so foul & tiresome, never so tedious and troublesome, we have no other way in which we can walk to this end: all confinement is cross to mans spirit: How are men affrighted from, and afflicted in the wayes of godliness, because of reproach of singularity? which should be rather their inducement and encouragement to perseverance with all diligence; for the Heirs of Heaven are singulars, not every one that cryeth *Lord, Lord*: the way to Heaven is singular, but one enclosed, & rescribed way, though our corrupt nature be disposed to run at liberty, and prophane will bear no restraint, yet we must know we must keep close to Gods Commandements, and walk in the one way, the one

Gate of his appointment unto life. Nature hath made many wayes to death, and but one way of difficulty and danger to passe into life, and corrupte nature can and doth create many wayes to Hell; but the gift of God is eternall life, to be obtained in, and by that *one, and only way*, which he hath determinated bounded and revealed.

Argu. 3. This Gate and way to life is strait, and narrow; because few *those be that find it* paucity of Travellers does make, as well as proclaim difficulty in the way of motion: for because few passe through it, it is *unstrait, untrdden*, not easily to be discerned: Christs flock is a *little flock*, the Elect are but a *remnant*: there are but a *few names* who are found faithful: many may follow Christ but there are few will sell that they have, and give to the poor some will deny themselves, take up their crosse and follow him many will call him Lord, Lord, but few will do what he saith: many may strive to enter in at the Strait Gate, but few are able to effect it: nor is there any more plain and clear demonstration of difficulty and danger then the paucity of those who passe through it: a common Road, is a beaten Road, every man will travel the open way, few will take pains to passe through straits to the possessions of life and glory.

Argu. 4. This gate is a strait, this way is narrow, for there is in it no entrance, no proesse without diligence. our Saviour did direct his curiousists questions to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*, but this puts me upon the application.

Applicati- The Application of this Doctrine might be large, and vari-
on. ous, but time will not allow me to expatiate: but doth constrain me to contract I will therefore passe by those many Inferencees which flow from hence, and confine my selfe to my Text, and our Saviours method (*viz.*) an exhortation, affectionately to embrace and earnestly to presse forward in the strait gate and narrow way.

My beloved, be intreated seriously to reflect upon your thought, *that strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life*; and let difficulty, persuade, provoke your diligence consider the words and exhortation of our Saviour, *enter in at the strait gate, and narrow way*, so our Evangelists, doth report it: but Luke reporteth it, *strive to enter in at the strait Gate*: The duty is the same in both these Evangelists, though the different occasions.

sons on which it was perswaded, caused some difference in ex-
 pression; but both the sentences are considerable and have their
 import. As *St. Mat.* presents it to us; it guideth our choice & affec-
 tions to embrace: according to *St. Luke*, it provoketh our industry in
 pursuit of our chosen object, that we may not miss to attain the
 end: enter in at the strait gate; that is, *choose*; and affectionately
 embrace the way of danger and difficulty; in which you cannot
 move without care and cost, without courage and consideration,
 without pressing and perplexity; although your nature cannot
 but affect ease, desire to walk at large, refuse under the very
 thoughts of restraint and regulation: be wise, be well advised by
 most faithful our Saviour; who have, and know the issues of life and
 death; to deny your selves, and direct your feet into the *narrow way*,
strait gate and narrow paths: cast your selves under divine direc-
 tion; passe your lives in an exact observancy of divine prescrip-
 tions; receive the yolk, abide the bonds of the Lord Jesus Christ;
 decline the way with, and in which flesh and blood is so much, so
 well pleased, and resign up your mind, will, affections, actions and
 passions, to the restraints of Reason, to the regulation of Religion:
 answerable to this Exhortation is our Saviours Argument, drawn
 from the end unto which this strait gate doth lead: *It leadeth un-*
to life: as if he should have said, you see before you different
 paths, you are to make your choice, be by me advised to consider,
 that *broad way, and wide gate, leadeth to destruction*; but this *strait*
gate and narrow way leadeth unto life: guide therefore your affec-
 tions by the end you aim at, and enter in at the strait Gate: If
 this day set before you life and death, chuse you which you will
 take: I cannot but tell you, if you embrace the *broad way*, fol-
 low the multitude to do evil, please your own lusts, and live as
 you list, without regard to, or restraint by Gods holy Word; you
 shall enjoy *present ease*, and *future endless misery*: but if you de-
 cline this broad way, and enter the strait Gate, deny your selves,
 enter the way of Gods Commandements, and walk uprightly in
 them; not turning aside to the right or left hand; you must in-
 deed undergo present hardship, but shall hereby attain unto,
 arrive at eternal happiness.

Let the end, the last in your enjoyment be the first thing in your
 intention, and you cannot stie in your thoughts what to chuse:
 who will not labour for life, rather then lie still and die? Who
 will not pass some straits to possess such glory, rather then live
 in pleasure and lose salvation for ever? who at the day of judge-
 ment

ment will not chase the portion of *Lazarus* before that of *Dives*. How sad a check is it to *Dives* comforts to hear the Lord say, *Thou hast now thy good things, but shalt be hereafter tormented*. How reviving refreshing is it to poor *Lazarus*, to know the Lord looketh on his low estate, and resolveth, that he, in this life afflicted, shall be in *Abraham's* bosom abundantly comforted, cost what it can, be it never so strait and narrow, enter in at the strait gate, it leadeth unto life.

According to St. *Luke*, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*; enter in to it, for life is the end of it, strive unto this entrance for your labour for life, and that calleth for the utmost diligence and violence of endeavours: strive not feebly and faintly, but with force and vigor; press forward in it with strength and vivacity, with power unto perplexity: strive unto, and again, until you sweat, until you bleed again, press into this narrow passage, until you be immured and perish, if need so require: stretch your limbs until you be not able to stand; walk with, wait on God untill and after you are weary; you cannot live with God unless you love God, you cannot love God unless you embrace him; pursue him with all your heart, with all your might, with all your soul, with all your strength: you seek salvation though it is not wages, you must work for it, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, with a fear of diligence, not of diffidence and despondency; a sight of *Israel's* glory will make a cursing *Balaam* cry out, *Oh that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my latter end might be like his*: but the laborious life of the righteous can only secure the happy death which passeth into eternal life. Heaven is not had with a hes finger: thwartwinded wishes will never set any in the haven of everlasting happiness: the slothful in Christianity can never inherit the promise the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, the violent take it by force, fight so as to get victory, so run as to obtain, so wrestle as to prevail, so strive as to be able to enter the strait gate, for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life.

Give me leave to enforce this general Exhortation, unto an industrious pressing on in holiness, and heavens way, by some few motives, which may persuade with you, and make you see the necessity thereof.

Consider therefore: Heavens way is an hard way, it is a way of difficulty, must be walked in with diligence: it is a way of danger, must be travelled with care: it is a way of dolour and distress must be moved in with deliberation and discretion: Heavens way is an hard way, because as you

have heard. It is *terminated and bounded* by one of which there is no reaching on either side, with the least of safety: Besides that, this hard in it self, it is made more hard by these things which attend it, or rather *its* in the entrance into this *Strait Gate*: and narrow way for it is to every the Sons of men.

A way of *obscurity*; hard to find out, hard to be travelled in, it is a *Mystery*: Great is the mystery of Godliness? *Mysteries* are not easily understood, it is a peculiar privilege, a special favour, a gift from heaven, from God, to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: this is not obvious to every eye; the natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are specially *discreet*: this way obscure in it self is *untrodden*, few there be who find it: the tract is small and *litle*, not easily discerned, the footsteps *found*, are to be followed, but their impression is so litle that they are soon worn out. Examples of exact obedience are very few: one Noah serving providence in the means of his own appointment, is the *Pattern* of *obedience* to the old world, one Abraham is the *pattern* of *perfect resignation* to God, *Abraham* is the *pattern* of *meekness*, one Job, for *patience*, one David, for *loyalty*, and so singular Saints have trodden, the tracts of special Graces, in the way to Heaven: and their footsteps are to be found with most diligent search and accurate observation: this obscure and untrodden way to life is perplexed with many *intricacies*, and *doubts*, which do arise from the variety of Gods providence, and variation of our condition: how to carry in a single, how in a married? ho to carry in an adverse, how in a prosperous state, how to carry in society, and variety of Society? how to carry in solitudes? how to live by faith in all conditions? how to live under Gods Ordinances, under all dispensations? how to do the duty of a Minister and of a common member to the Church? How to pursue the purity, and how to preserve the unity of the Church? how to advance the power of godliness? and how to attend and edify out selves by Gods Ordinances, under confused corrupt disorderly prophane administration? In a word how to perceive, and performe the *Graces* and *Punctilio* of piety pointed out, and to be put into *are by* and under the present providence, so as not to slip into slip on either hand, are such cases of conscience, and doubts of minde which must but cannot (with ease, nor without much diligence, and difficulty) be resolved for our guidance in the strait narrow pathes, which lead to life and glory.

Yet again consider this obscure, untrodden and perplexed way

Heavens
way ob-
scure. 1

1 Tim. 3.
16.

Mat. 13.

11.
1 Cor. 2.
14.

Christians, if in good earnest you seek life, you must strive, you cannot without great struggling unto and against, vanquish the difficulties of obscurity, opposition, and your own averfeness to the way to Heaven.

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for your entrance is indispensably necessary; the gate to life is but one, and no entrance into this gate without striving: No possibility of salvation but in Gods way, be it never so contrary to our own will: And so narrow is the punctillio of piety, and passage to life that a passion, a point of good manners doth many times divert us, and endanger our salvation; Davids fretting did almost, and Peters fear did altogether trip up his heels in the way of truth; he walked not with a right foot: yea Peters good manners must be sometimes rebuked by his Masters pity, If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me: Be Gods way never so repugnant to reason, a proud Naaman must stoop to it, on retain his Leprosie to his ruine; be the gate to heaven never so much against our Will, we must into it, for we have no other way: He that loveth any thing, though life it self, better then Christ is not worthy of him. The gate and way to life is most certainly, *Causa sine qua non*; if we will not strive we cannot enter; and if we do not strive, let us profess Christ at what rate we will, and possess the dispensations of Christs Gospel, privileges of his Church, and presence, in what measure we can; when we would enter life we may knock in vain, for the Lord will protest he knoweth us not, we were not under his conduct in the way, and may not therefore come into his communion in the end of our Religion.*

Motive 2.

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for the success is certain unto serious and constant diligence; your industry shall be enforced to its end; God is not bound, but he doth not deny his grace to such as strenuously, studiously press in the way of his commandments: This is the Argument by which the Apostle perswadeth diligence and activity for salvation, *Work out (saith he) your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own pleasure.* Such as proceed in the conflict under Christs Banner, shall not fail of the conquest; such as persevere in pressing forward, shall find*

Motive 3.

the grace of Christ sufficient for them, until they apprehend that for, which they were apprehended of Christ Jesus. Our Saviour indeed telleth us, *many did strive but were not able*; but you must understand it aright, they strove unto, not in the act; they strove under the pangs of conviction, put forth many good purposes; but these proved abortive, and never passed into act; their hearts were never indeed set on God, on Christ, on Holiness; their judgements were herein informed; but their affections were not herein inflamed; for he that hath an heart shall never want strength to go to heaven; strive in the entering, proceeding act, and we shall prove he who hath begun his good work shall and will perfect it, unto the day of his Grace.

Motive 4.

Heb. 11. 13.

Strive *we* to enter the strait gate, for the end is more worth than the utmost of our endeavours; Heaven will make amends for all the hardship of the way thither. How did the Patriarchs press on the bare perceptions of faith, *not having received the promise* (which we have performed) but seeing them afar off, saluting them at a distance; our Lord Jesus hath led us this way, for the joy which was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame. The conscience of duty will make a sincere Saint confess, that in the most exact of his obedience, he is an *unprofitable servant*; but when we shall come to make a sensible comparison between the dignity we receive, and the diligence we used, the difficulties we felt, we shall find cause to cry out, *by Grace we are saved*: The light and momentary afflictions through which we pass here, are not to be compared to the exceeding, eternal weight of glory which we shall enjoy hereafter. Our present pressing, fighting, striving in heavens way may cost us many a weary step, and weeping eye, many sighs and groans, many prayers and tears, many cares and fears, many an aching head and heart: It may cost us our best worldly enjoyments, dearest Relations, and our very life, but cost what it will, it can never cost too dear: If once we arrive at this Haven we shall sit down without the least repining, repenting thought that ever it cost so dear; we would not for ten thousand times as much have lost eternal life.

Christian Friends, I hope the consideration of these things

things will excite your diligence, and provoke you to press through the many difficulties and dangers which are in the way to heaven, and stir up your selves to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and go forward in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. What now remaineth but that I present you with some few Directions; which being well observed may facilitate your passage to glory, alleviate your burden, and make Christianity, the course of piety, a course of more delight and ease. Observe therefore these Rules for your help herein.

Go not without God; march after the Captain of your Salvation; under the conduct of the Lord of Hosts; the presence of God is the prop of the soul in all perplexity; the most certain protection of his people in all their distresses and dangers; the only assurance and encouragement that God ever gave, or his servants ever desired in all their undertakings of difficulty and danger was, *his presence*; *Jeremiah* must stand as an iron wall, and pillar of brass against Kings, Princes, Priests, Prophets, people, under the alone protection of, *I will be with thee, saith the Lord*; So also do the Ministers of the Gospel. *Gods presence* is the best security in all our straits; his Spirit will guide us into all truth, resolve all our doubts, and be a voice unto us saying, *This is the way walk in it*. When we are ready to wander on the right or on the left hand, his Providence will supply all our wants, his Grace will support all our weakness; in a word, whatsoever be our temptation his wisdom will find for us a way of escape; that we may be able to bear it; for *if God be with us, who can be against us?* what can be too hard for us? *I know how to wait, and how to abound; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, was the Apostles, and is every Saints experience.

Christian Friends, your progress towards heaven is as a Wilderness-march to the Land of Promise; *stir not without God*. Take up *Moses* resolution, *Verily if thou go not with me, we will not go up hence*: Be not put off with an Angel, the Angels are undoubtedly ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation: We owe much to God for the Ministry of the Angels,

Isa. 49. 25.
 51. 14, 15.

they pitch their tents about them that fear him, and keep them in all their ways. But (my beloved) the difficulties which attend our salvation can only be vanquished by a *Divine Arm*, they are too strong for any created being; to divide the Sea when the waves roar upon the Captive exile, hatching to be delivered, it is the work of the Lord of Hosts; to take away the captive from the mighty, and to deliver the prey of the terrible, is the proper act of the mighty God of Jacob. Move not without God, as ever you mean to move with strength and success; for of our selves we can do nothing; the Lord is he who worketh our works in us and for us, both to will and to do.

Help 2.

Get and study a right Map of Heaven; get the description of the City of life, for the nature and situation thereof will not onely enflame your affections, and add wings to your endeavours, but will help us to guess how to steer our course thitherward: To be well skilled in the Map, is the great benefit of travel: And to have good intelligence of the enemies Quarters, is the great advantage of Warfare: The paths of peace are only made known by *Wisdom*. The Prince of life can only reveal the state and passage unto life: The Lord Jesus resolved his Disciples to be more then half in Heaven, when he could assure them they knew the place, and they knew the way. My beloved cleave close to the Scriptures, and study them, they shew the new Jerusalem which is above, the Rivers, Rocks and Shelves, the Ports, Creeks, Straits and narrow passages which you pass; the dangers and difficulties which attend you in your passage; the people and Enemies you must encounter, and how you may direct your selves in all these. Christians, know that the light of Nature is too dark to describe the dignity or difficulties; the dictates of men, the traditions of the Church, the determination of Council; the Laws of Princes, are improper, imperfect directions to the duties whereby we travel to Heaven. I despise not those, but give them their due honor: But I would have you to remember *Israels* wilderness-march to the Land of promise was in every step directed by the immediate Oracles of God: And the eye of Faith did direct the Patriarchs through many narrow, strait

strait passages, to seek the City not made with hands, and the Scriptures were written that you may beleive Christ is the way, and that by beleiving you may have eternal life, search then the Scriptures, for in them you think, and I am sure you have eternallife.

Gain an account what it may cost you to get to Heaven: Pre- Help 3.
monitus, pramunitus; a foreseen Charge is easily defrayed; our Saviours Advice is, that we be wise Master builders, and politique Warriors, to forecast, a capacity to effect, before we undertake an enterprize; and to compleat the Fabrick, before we lay the Foundation; he who can account all things *lost and dung* in comparifon of Christ, will easily insult over difficulty in Heavens way; and triumphantly resolve neither distress, nor tribulation, nor persecution, nor peril, nor sword, nor famine, nor nakedness, shall be able to separate from his love of Christ, but in these he shall be more than a Conqueror; they who consider it is written of Gods Servants, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, and accounted sheep for the slaughter, will not think much to lay down or lose his life in the Gate, by pressing in the narrow way to life; Convince we our selves that Christ will have our all, or none of us, he will be imbraced above all, he hath declared whosoever loveth Lands, Houses; or Wife, or Children, or life it self better than him, is not worthy of him, we then shall easily deny our selves, and take up our cross and follow him; Remember we, that through much tribulation we enter into Heaven, that the true Religion and course of Godliness did and doth call for the loss of all outward comforts, and propound future glory, a better and more durable substance; we shall then take joyfully the spoyling of our goods; expectation maketh hard things to be born with ease.

Grave upon the soul principles of true Religion, the first principles of the Oracles of God; for these as the basis, or ground plot of any building, as the axioms of any Art or Science, or as the first draught of the Picture, do facilitate and direct the future structure, and perfection; and are in all straits eminently serviceable; Gods method to make his people walk Help 4.
 in

in his way, is to write his Law upon their hearts; untaught and sed souls having confused notions of faith, which through want of order, and ability, do perplex and entangle themselves in the ways of piety, many times in a blind zeal they confound the substance, and Circumstances of Gods Ordinances; and make a defect in the one, equally heinous as in the other; and not knowing how to guide their judgments, they charge upon themselves duties whereof their relation or condition doth deny them to be capable; be sure you lay in the soul the first principles of the Oracles of God, and then leave them by a regular progress in Christianity; sure I am, that some, yea many souls are ship-wreckt for want of ballanced judgements: many lose all by lifting themselves up to the dignities of Saints, not once acquainting themselves with the duties of Saints; and pretend unto the joys of believing, without once pondering the principles of faith; the unacquainted with, will easily ere from the faith; seducers need no better a Subject for their design, then simple souls affected to, but ignorant of the truth, and way to life.

Help 5.

Get, keep, and exercise a spirit of discerning: In all your getting, get understanding; Wisdom to guide our affairs will make our burden easie, the spirit of grace and sanctification is a spirit of discerning, the spiritual man judgeth all things; Heavens way is in nothing so strait and narrow as in the bounds which restrain us; the dangers which on all sides limit it; true piety lyeth in such narrow points that without a clear judgment and good understanding we cannot hit it; the Devil and his instruments are so politique and subtle, that without a spirit of discerning they will readily delude, they lead captive silly souls; through want of wisdom we entangle ourselves, and many times make stumbling stones in our own way; want of judgment causeth superstitious scrupulosity, rash censuring, vain presumption, and feigned reverence, he that is not able to discern between good and evil; will many times condemn good as evil, and take evil for good; will through fear of sin fly duty, or be bold to rash into sin without fear; he will not respect, or he will renounce Gods Ordinances, because of mens disorders; or else he will impose his own inventions

ventions, and think to please God by a voluntary humility. By the spirit of discerning, believers must prove Doctrines, trie the spirits, distinguish Ministers, know the Devil when appearing an Angel of light; differ Christs Church, from the flocks of Christs Companions, and discern Gods Ordinances from humane inventions, conversant about them, or in their room and stead; and direct their own conversation in, and according to the speciality of duty, which the providence of God and their present state doth require. And know how to chuse or refuse things indifferent, and sever them from things necessary, and walk with even, upright feet according to the truth of the Gospel. Follow God with the ease and freedom of those Travellers who see and know their way; no difficulty like darkness in the things which are to be beleived and done, because life, and eternal life is dependant thereupon.

Give up your selves, your whole selves to the will of God. Sub- Help 6.
 jection is an estate of ease; nothing but a stubborn nature and perverse Will can perplex them who are at the command of others: How easie are the hard things of Warfare, by the keeping of the Souldiers in strict obedience to their Officers? shall not it be much more such to us, if we will yeild free and full obedience to the Captain of our Salvation? Let therefore your judgement guide affection; piety, prevail against policy; what you should; against what you would do. Let Gods Will once revealed become unto you the reason of all obedience in action; and acquiescency in passion; pray heartily and in truth *Father in Heaven let thy will be done*, captivate carnal reason, and bring every proud thought and high imagination in subjection to the will of Christ; debates of flesh and blood are distracting to the mind; and destructive to the soul. Paul found not a more ready way then not to reason with flesh and blood, when God was pleased to reveal himself to him. Let the eye of reason read Gods will revealed, and then by faith silence the debates, and deaden captive this depraved power; resignation unto Gods will is the formality of true obedience; therefore called *obedience of faith*, and this obedience can be the one y easie property of Gods Children. Gods will is and can be

be the onely warrant of his worship; to offer God mans inventions, is to go a whoring from him, and to rebel against him; our Religion must be according to his expresse direction. It is the great anxiety of the godly to know the will of God; but obedience or a readines and resolvednes to beleive what he shall speak, to do what he shall direct, and to suffer meekly what he shall dispose, is a discharge thereof; for he that will do, shall know the Will of God: the bending carnal, wrangling reason to the pleasure of the most high, will pass us with much ease through the strait Gate and narrow way which doth lead to life.

Help 7.

Go in good Company; it is not good for man to be alone, was Gods reason for creating humane society; solitude is not more sad then dangerous; *two are better then one, if one fall the other will lift up*; go therefore in company towards Heaven; it is Gods direction that we should assemble our selves, and go in troops to his Sanctuary, and call upon one another to go up to Zion: Christian Souls stand charged with one another. It was a saying beleeming a cursed Cain, *Am I my Brothers keeper?* Gospel Counsel is that Christians consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, that they exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that if any be overtaken with a fault, he be restored by a spirit of meeknes. I confess there are few who walk in Heavens way, and find out the strait gate and narrow way, yet there are some and it will be hard indeed that we stand or go alone in the perplexing paths of life; say therefore as David, *I am a Companion for them who fear God.*

In the choice of your company be sure you look to two things; Keep in Gods true Church, and under Gods true Ministers. These are the most certain conducts unto glory, the very Ship and Pilots which convey us unto Life; by, and unto these are dispensed the promises of Grace, and Covenant of Salvation; union with, and subjection unto these, is our security in all straits, and propriety in all the promises. God hath promised nothing to individual persons, but all things to and for his Church, and so to the Sons of Zion; as members of his Church, non-continuance in Communion with

with the Church, is in Gospel language, *not holding the head*, by which the whole is increased. Separation from the Church is most certainly destructive; to be cast out of Christs Church is the severest doom on this side of the last Judgement; and to cast our selves out of the Church, is the greatest and saddest sin that can be, on this side the sin against the Holy Ghost: They are equally in danger who throw themselves, and who are thrown overboard by others. I could never yet know how to differ the estate (more then by the sin of it) of a *self-excommunicate*, and an *excommunicate by the Church*: Gods ordinary power and presence of grace is confined to his Church Catholique Visible (for of the invisible these things cannot be predicated) and therefore *ex Ecclesia nulla salus*: All men of all opinions concerning the form of the Church, do agree in this, *That there is no ordinary way of salvation out of the Church*; and all Churches constituted of old, or gathered of late oppose them selves, and are opposed to the world; calling the men of the world into communion with them, as ever they look to be saved; and cast into the World, and so unto Satan, the god of the world, whomsoever they cut off from the Church.

The Church of God may backslide, and be defiled; the Ministers of God may be careless and negligent; yet prophane, proud and persecuting; the sheep may be not onely not looked after, but driven and violently scattered on Gods mountains; their waters may be puddled, and their pastures trodden down; Gods Worship may be defiled by corrupt Appendants, and so his Ordinances may be disorderly administered, and his Word may be made of none effect by mens traditions; the keys of the Kingdom may be turned against those who follow Christ: and these evils are not onely provoking unto Gods jealousy, but also a sad Omen of his departure; and the Churches approaching devastation and dissolution: But yet, whilst they continue *really a Church*, and *relatively his Church*, and retain his *substantial, essential worship and Ordinances*, and he continueth his *own Ministry and presence*, though his provoked, reproving presence; departing, ex-postulating presence, those that fear his name, and mourn for the abominations they cannot mend, must not withdraw themselves, despise or neglect his Ordinances, or decline his solemn

publicke, Solemn Worship. When the sons of *Ely* by their prophaneſs, and the violent diſorder of their Miniſtration, cauſed the people to *loath the offerings of the Lord*, I find not that any did leave off or forbear to bring them: And when the Image of Jealouſie was in the Temple, and brought God to the threshold ready to depart, I find not that the people fled from it. Chriſtians, we muſt follow, nor go before God: When he removeth the Candleſtick, then we may ſeek light elſewhere; but if his Ordinances abide him, though by dim and dark lights, they are in *Moses chair*, and we muſt hear them. I could never yet underſtand by that caution (*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*) *hear them not*; for they teach for doctrines the traditions of men. I cannot but commend to your ſerious conſideration the prayer of the men who did fear God, and Gods answer unto them, in a caſe of diſorder in, and defection from the true Church; it is in *Cant.* 1. 7, 8. *Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where thou feedeſt thy flock, where thou makeſt them to reſt at noon; for why ſhould I turn aſide by the flocks of thy Companions? If thou know me, O thou faireſt among women, go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beſide the ſhepherds tents*: The men who feared the Lord were at a loſs for to finde and determine the Aſſembly in which Gods gracious preſence might be enjoyed: they were afraid of falling into the flock of *Chriſts Companions*, who were ſeparated Aſſemblies, gathered, ſelf-constituted Aſſemblies; worſhipping the true God with his own Ordinances, as to the matter, but by a ſelf-conſecrated Miniſtry in ſelf determined places (and ſo defective in the eſſentiall form) and for their profeſſion, and pretence of relation to Chriſt called his *Companions*: In this ſtrait they ſeriously enquire and pray God for direction what to do, and which way to turn; and he directeth them by two marks, as ſtanding and infallible ſigns, by which to ſee their courſes: *The footſteps of his flock*, the ſolemn celebration of his own Worſhip: And the *ſhepherds tents*, the regular exiſtency of his Miniſters, by the order of his appointment. Give me leave to note unto you ſome obſervations of an Author, whoſe name hath more acceptance and authority with many among you then what I can ſay. He referreth this Scripture histori-

cally to the state of those who feared God under Jeroboams schism and rebellion, and when Judah was defiled with Solomons High-places and Idolatry; and inferreth, *A Church is black; its deformities stand in the fall, and sins of the people and Princes; in their folly, declining to Idolatry, in their schisms and rents from their mother; in their prophaneſs, apoſtacy and rebellion in Church and Commonwealth.*

Cottou.

He observeth, there may be a true comely Church in the midst of these deformities; the sins of the Princes and people may make the Church black, but cannot take away her comeliness; run we not therefore from the Church because of her blackness, but run to her and embrace her in the midst of her defections.

This teacheth the children of the Church not to separate from the Church for corruption sake.

It was a sin in them who were angry with the Church, as some of the separation are and do depart from us: What, and if some cast off England shall we reject her, because some of the sons of her Mother do so.

Here is shewed two marks of the true Church of God; The footsteps of his flocks, Assemblies of Gods people to his true Ordinances; and his own Ministers.

Thus far, and in these words doth this reverend Author, though afterwards a great countenancer of the thing he here condemned. This I say Christians, it may sound harsh in your ears, but you must let it sink into your hearts. The Church defiled and disordered, must not be despised or declined; the Worship and Ordinances of God uncomfortably, unprofitably administred; yea with some superfluous Appendants must not be disowned, or determined evil; but embraced and attended as his Worship. The crisis of pietie in this case, is to maintain our converse with God in his own Ordinances, dispensed in a mode, grievous yea loathsome to our souls; continue our communion when we mourn for what we cannot mend. Observe it, Christs Ministrie was most vehemently, convincingly, enragingly inveigle against the erroneous Doctrines, prophane and superstitious lives of the Church of the Jews, and then Priests, and Teachers, yet he continued communion with her, and appeared an Advocate for her against the flocks of his companions, self-gathered, constituted Churches;

we know what we worship; Salvation is of the Jews: So long as Gods Ordinances are *salvably* dispensed, take heed to your own personal actions, in any imposed or directed evils; and disorders; *watch* over the imposition and administration which may extend a guilt on the Church collectively, but disown not the Church, despise not the Ministry, decline not the Worship whilst they exist the *Lord*. Look to it that your zeal to purity, break not unity; and your loathing humane inventions, make you not leave Gods Institutions: You are Christs sheep, as you will be led, be looked after by the shepherd and Bishop of your souls, see to it that you leap not out of his fold. You may have your waters puddled, your pastures trodden, the proud of the flock to push you with horn and with hoof; your Pastors may rule you with pride and with cruelty, *Lording it over Gods heritage*; and you (they being careless of you) may be dispensed: But I beseech you, when the great shepherd shall come to judge between sheep and sheep, between you and your shepherds, let him find you on the *mountains of Israel*, though scattered and afflicted. Communion with the Church under corruption may not be very comfortable, but be assured it still be safe. Reformation must be mournfully endeavoured, but Separation will never effect it, it will for ever hinder, supplant, subvert it. I must tell you my determination is by Gods grace to seek *purging of Ordinances in union with the Church*, and by non-communicating communion to witness against, and endeavour to remove disorder and corruption.

Ezek. 34.

Help 8.

Ephes. 6. 12.

Go continually Armed; your course of piety is a constant militation, be then wary Soldiers, be Armed Cap-a-pie, take unto you the whole Armour of God, *that you may be able to resist in the evil day*; have your Loyns girt with verity, principles of truth, the spirit of a sound mind; your breast guarded with the *breastplate of Righteousness*, integrity of heart; your head covered with the *helmet of hope*, which will under the greatest Billows and most roaring Waves hold your head above the waters; have your feet shod with patience, the *preparations of the Gospel of peace*: In every step you set you have sharp shells, heart-piercing, passion-provoking crosses, losses,

ies, distresses and afflictions, you have need of patience, that when you have done the Will of God you may inherit the promise; you cannot without patience continue in well doing unto the obtainment of the Glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, which you do seek; take with you the shield of faith in Gods declared will for Doctrine or practise, in Gods glorious properties, and gracious promises, those will quench the most fiery darts of the Devil; take unto you the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to cut down your way, kill your Lust, the Worlds allurements, and the Devils suggestions; thus armed stand fast in your Christian resolution, but move forward; advance in your Christian conversation, and you shall with ease encounter and overcome all opposition for the Captain of our Salvation hath led our enemies captive, and looketh that we defend our own souls against the subtle, malicious strokes of a subdued, though our sworn Enemies.

Rem. 2. 27.

Guest your way by the compass of the Covenant, the Lord hath condescended to deal with man by way of Covenant, for the effecting of his Salvation; this is a Covenant of Grace, Grace is the ground of it, it was freely made, for we had no obligation on Gods Justice, or power to constrain or exact it; Grace is the matter of it; I will be your God, you shall be my people; you shall walk in my ways, my spirit shall be in your hearts; Grace is the form of it; I will be your God, I will write my Law on your hearts, I will put my spirit within you, you shall walk in my ways, my grace shall be sufficient for you; Grace is the end of it, our sanctification here, and our salvation hereafter, and the means necessary unto both in the way of their obtainment; and our pursuit of them; This Covenant is the Contract of the Bible, the compendium of the Gospel, Christ is Mediator, the Ministers are dispensers, Ordinances are the dispensations, Faith and Obedience are the conditions; Grace and Glory, with all good things is the matter of this everlasting Covenant; this Covenant, like a Compass, points at all parts of Heaven, when we are in the wide Ocean of the World, out of sight of any Land to guide us, we may steer by this Compass to our desired Haven; when we are in darkness and danger between the narrow Creeks, and
strait

Help 9.

strait passages of *Sylla* and *Caribdis*, this *Covenant* is a light, a
 Lanthorn at Land to guide us, unto that Nick and narrow
 point which will secure us. *Christians*, the comfort of this *Covenant* is not known till
 being shut up from men, secluded from Ordinances, and un-
 der the want of all means (it may be so much as a Bible) you
 begin to reflect your Relation to God, Gods Dispensations of
 grace to man, and call to mind the Indenture, and Charter
 which doth secure, desire, and direct both; This *Cove-*
nant will dissolve our doubts, direct our duties, and dictate
 our comforts in all straits, in all conditions, this and that I
 must do; or not do; this and that I must expect, or not
 expect; this is or that is truth, or Error will be easily infer-
 red by him, who is interested in, and understandeth the
Covenant of Salvation; by this, when I a poor *Gentile* con-
 sider *Abraham* is ignorant of me; and *Jacob* knoweth me not,
 can yet cry unto the Lord thou art my God; by this when I am
 in the Furnace; I can cry unto the Lord, my God, and ap-
 prehend him, answering me my people; I can understand by
 this the word which speaketh unto us as Children, say, my
Son despise not the chastening of the Lord; I hereby know cor-
 rection, paternal chastigation to be the result of affection from
 God, and relation to God, and so when I sit in darkness and
 can see no light, I can trust in the name of the Lord, and stay
 my self upon my God, faithful in *Covenant*, who will not
 fail me; I hereby discern sin, and detect error to be eschewed;
 discover truth and duty to be embraced and pursued. In a
 Word, what the word doth more amply and abundantly de-
 clare when I am at liberty to use, the *Covenant of Grace* doth
 suggest, and from thence I may infer it for my comfort and
 guidance when restrained; the good therein promised I may
 boldly challenge; the evil thereunto repugnant I must reject;
 the truth and dutie thereby dictated, I must receive, and do;
 you look for experience, and I tell you this in the uprightness
 of my heart, in my late condition the *Covenant of Grace* was
 my great comfort, the consideration of the *Covenant* was my
 counsel. I would not for all the world have been ignorant of,
 uninterested in, or estranged unto the *Covenant of God*: *Go*
you and do likewise. If you are confounded in your passage to
 life,

life, it is for want of the Compass of the Covenant, or skill to use it.

Go forward in Heavens way, being entred the strait *Help 10.*
gate and narrow way stand not still; motion will make it easie: Travellers are more tired at the beginning then end of their journey, because not used to such violence; custom in all things become a second nature; whatsoever you do go not back; *non progredi est regredi* in heavens way; not to go forward is to go backward: The enemy will come upon you, if you advance not against him: Remember *Ents wife*; take heed of backsliding, you will thereby hinder your selves in heavens way, and wound your consciences; take heed of *Apostacy from the faith*, you will thereby ruine your salvation and hurt religion. Consider, *The just live* (that is persevere in grace and holiness) *by faith*; but if any man draw back Gods soul shall have no pleasure in him. Be it your care not to be found in the number of them *who draw back unto perdition, but of them who beleve unto salvation of their soul*: Having begun in the Spirit do not end in the flesh; inure your selves unto hardship, be *stedfast and unmovable*, and you cannot but *abound in the work of the Lord*, nor shall your labour be in vain. *Heb. 10. 38 & 39.*

Beloved Friends, the way to life being bounded with such dangerous precipices, beset with such difficulties and opposition, and your depraved nature being apt to wander, averse and indisposed to diligence and activity in holiness, you cannot but find *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who finde it*. But I beseech you enter, chuse to enter, it is *the way to life*: Strive to enter, it is *strait*; observe, practice these Directions now given, by Gods grace your entrance will be an act of ease and success. Consider what you have heard, and the Lord give you understanding.

FINIS.